



Speech by

Hon. K. LINGARD

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

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PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (2.40 p.m.): The member for Cleveland referred to the 66 ALP members of the parliament, and the 'Hear, hears' show that it is easy for the ALP to say, 'It is hard to be humble.' However, eight weeks into this term it is quite obviously becoming, 'It's easy to become arrogant.' The arrogance in this legislation comes from the opening comments by the Premier regarding this legislation in which he said that the legislation is 'to enhance the effectiveness, the efficiency and the accountability of this parliament'.

The initial proposals for this legislation were that the committee should have four government members and two opposition members with the chairman being elected by the government. The chairman was to have both a directional vote and, if necessary, a casting vote. We have also seen that it could have four ALP members of the quorum, if a quorum was necessary. Naturally, the opposition would not agree, so the government has been forced to compromise. However, this was an attempt to treat the committee system in a typically arrogant manner, a manner which has already become very noticeable in this ALP government. One only has to look at the news releases about the extra personnel given to opposition groups to see a good example of this arrogance. The release from the Premier referred to the fact that each elected member is to receive an extra staff member. That was the opening comment. The release had two pages and the first page referred to the fact that each member was to get an extra personnel. Under the new arrangements, the National Party was to receive this; the shadow ministers would receive this; the Liberal and the One Nation members would all receive this; the opposition Liberals and One Nation would all receive these particular things which they could pool—they could pool the salaries for these extra staff to enable them to employ fewer but more senior staff.

It then talked about the leaders of the Liberal and the One Nation Parties and what they would receive. It then went on to say how money would be saved from the two Independents; it would be saved from One Nation. Then it said that the allocation of an extra officer for each member brings us into line with other jurisdictions. Not once did it mention the fact that the ALP would receive 66 extra staff. If that is not arrogance, what is?

So we found the media running with the comment about all of the extra personnel that One Nation would receive, the extra personnel that the Liberals would receive, the extra personnel that the National Party would receive, but not once in the Premier's release did it say anything about the fact that the ALP had just given itself 66 extra personnel. If that is not arrogance, what is? If it is not arrogance, why didn't the Premier start to talk about the fact that the ALP was to give itself 66 extra members and 66 extra staff?

Mr Reynolds: Aren't you taking your extra member?

Mr LINGARD: Aren't I taking it? No-one has done it yet because, as we know, it has not been put in place. There was a great announcement about two months ago—

Mr Reynolds: Will you take it on 1 July?

Mr LINGARD: The member for Townsville unfortunately interjects, but he knows as well as I do that his cabinet has not put it in place. The government has made grand announcements about exactly what we would all get in the way of extra personnel, but not one of those people is in place at present. So the government has put out a release which never referred to the fact that there would be 66 extra

personnel being appointed to the ALP, and it expected the media to take it; it expected the public of Queensland to take it; and the Labor government says that it is not arrogant or that it is not showing some indications of arrogance. Of course it is!

Today we see legislation aimed at continuing the domination of the government on committees set up to monitor the government. The words 'monitor the government' are very, very important because, as government members have said today, we are talking about the EARC report; we are talking about the parliamentary committee set up to monitor that. The intent of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1995 was to provide a comprehensive system of parliamentary committees to enhance the ability of parliament to monitor the efficiency of government as envisaged in the Fitzgerald report. No-one has any criticisms about that point because over the years this parliament has adopted most of the EARC and the Parliamentary Committee for Electoral and Administrative Review recommendations. However, it is incorrect to assume that all the recommendations have been successful. There are some members who have been in this parliament for a long time. There are members who were in the parliament before all of these recommendations were put in place and there are members in this parliament who can say that the Fitzgerald report in some instances was basically flawed and there were some things in the Fitzgerald report that never, ever saw the light of day, thank goodness, because we in this parliament said, 'No, that will not work.'

There are some things in that report that we put into place in this parliament that did not work, and one of those was the Parliamentary Services Commission. As soon as that commission was put in place here, we said, 'It will not work. You cannot run this parliament with a committee.' What we wanted was a speaker who had the role of running this parliament, a speaker who could make those decisions. We continued to fight about the Parliamentary Services Commission, and the reasons were that Fitzgerald and those people had an unbelievable view that members in this parliament would act in a bipartisan way.

I say to all those members who are on committees: if you are not referring to the fact that you have seen some bad work as far as the party system in these parliamentary committees is concerned, you know as well as I do that you are not telling the truth, because it is very difficult in these committees when you get to a very touchy point not to split ALP one way, conservatives the other way. I have seen it happen so many times.

Similarly, the system of having the government with a majority on these committees is not working. It would not have worked with four government members and two members of the opposition if we are to monitor the works of this parliament. These committees were set up to monitor the government, but in the EARC and PCEAR reports there was a philosophy of bipartisanship.

I note the statements of Wayne Goss in 1995 when he said—and I repeat the words from *Hansard*—

At the end of the day, the success of the new committees will depend on the commitment of all sides of the House to make the system work. Most of all, it will require continued commitment to developing a spirit of political bipartisanship without which no parliamentary system can flourish.

How true! For those people who are saying that they have been on committees where there has been great bipartisanship, I would say to them that they have not encountered many controversial issues.

A government member: Garbage!

Mr LINGARD: The member interjects. Let us have a look at what happened with the backflow inquiry conducted by the Public Works Committee. The minister wanted to vindicate all of the things that he had done about backflow. What did he do? He referred it to the Public Works Committee. What did the Public Works Committee find? It found that there were allegations of the minister misleading parliament, there were allegations of the minister misleading the committee. Those things were referred to in the report. Has anything ever been done by the Premier? Has anything ever been done by the Leader of the House about those allegations of the misleading of parliament, about the allegations of misleading an inquiry? No, they were swept under the carpet very subtly but blatantly and they have never, ever been brought out. So right through the election period we have found that the Premier has done absolutely nothing about the statements that the minister misled the parliament and that the minister misled an inquiry. So we found that the committee split three-all. Of course, unbelievably, a casting vote was made by the chairman, an ALP member. Which way did he go? Of course he went with the government. So we had a four-three vote.

Let us have a look at any thought about the Public Works Committee looking at Lang Park. The Public Works Committee has been asked many times to look at the Lang Park funding. What has happened? Three conservative members of that committee say, 'We should look at Lang Park.' The three ALP members have said, 'No we should not. Do not touch Lang Park.' So it is three-all. What happens with the casting vote? Of course it goes against the conservatives; of course it goes towards the government. So the Public Works Committee does not look at Lang Park. I suppose members are saying that this Public Works Committee is there to monitor what the government is doing. The

government will not allow the Public Works Committee or the Public Accounts Committee to look at something which is controversial, especially if the government members' caucus and the chairman goes with it. So any thought that these committees are monitoring a government in the form in which they are established is completely untrue and dishonest.

What happens in the other states? Other states allow the chairman of a committee to be a member of the opposition. Can't members imagine this government allowing the chairman of a committee to be from the opposition!

Government members interjected.

Mr LINGARD: Other states do but, because of this government's arrogant attitude, not here. The government members say, 'Why would you do a thing like that?' Because they might get found out! Wouldn't it be beautiful if the Public Works Committee could conduct some sort of investigation into Lang Park? That would be great, but that would put the cat among the pigeons for the government. So what happens? We do not have a report on something like that, we do not even have an investigation. All the government has to do is caucus, allow the chairman to have the casting vote and we do not even have such an inquiry.

For the committees to be effective, there needs to be a method for the opposition to have the ability to initiate inquiries into all aspects of government policy. Those members who know a little bit about some of these committees would know that public works committees in other states have to investigate all aspects of funding. Those committees do not have the choices that we have in Queensland, where the committee sits down and works out what it wants to look at. I see the chairman of the Public Works Committee. This state's Public Works Committee has looked at some marvellous things. We looked at the Normanton bridge after it was built to see how effective it was. That was great! Were we going to criticise the government after the thing has built and named in very controversial circumstances? The Public Works Committee has also looked at all the road systems of Queensland and the barge on the Brisbane River. They were all great things, but the committee has never had a look at Lang Park. That would be too controversial. The Public Works Committee did not really want to get involved in the report on the water backflow. That was pretty controversial, too, because the minister was supposed to have told a fib to the parliament.

So the Premier says that this committee system is set up to monitor the government. In the first place, the government said, 'Let us have it as four-two. That is pretty fair.' I refer to the EARC recommendations. The Premier said that we should all observe the EARC recommendations but, as I have said, many of the EARC recommendations and the recommendations contained in the Fitzgerald inquiry have not been observed by this parliament. We have seen how they have failed. They were well in place before the committee system was set up. Any thought by Fitzgerald that parliamentarians would act in a bipartisan way is absolute baloney.

So I am saying to the government: why not have a chairman of the committee from the opposition? Why not have parliamentary committees that investigate everything done by this government, not just the things that it wants them to investigate? That way, we then might have something that is fair and something that monitors the government. Why does the Premier not have an Auditor-General who works on performance-based auditing? He will not have that, but I heard the Premier say that when he was in opposition. All this government has is an Auditor-General who looks at all the invoices, looks at all the payments, and says, 'They all match up. That is beautiful. Here is the report.' However, no-one looks at the Minister for Families and says, 'What you should be spending money on is this. You have spent money in incorrect areas.' That is performance-based auditing. But, no, that would monitor the government. That would give the Auditor-General too much to work on. So the Auditor-General just looks at invoices and statements, exactly as this government's committee system does. The Premier knows as well as I do that it would be extremely controversial and extremely unlikely for any of those committees to say, 'There is something wrong with the government.'

In 1996, the Premier quoted the following comments made by Max Bingham—

... one can have the best systems in the world, but if one does not have the standards of individuals to go with them then those systems will fail.

I agree with that statement. However, if any member of this parliament tells me that they can get through their parliamentary career without referring to their party affiliations, there is something quite dishonest about the way in which they are talking.

I note also the presentation in 1996 of ideas about the committee system. I make no criticisms of that. I agree that we did exactly the same thing in terms of having three-all on the committees. Mr Borbidge presented legislation that reduced the size of these committees from seven members to six members. He said that there would be three members from the government and three members from the opposition on the committees. He then said that each member has a vote on each question and, where the votes are equal, the chairperson has the casting vote, to which an ALP then opposition member said, 'You've got to be kidding.' I will use the words of that ALP member and say that the

government has to be kidding if it thinks that it is going to have three government and three opposition members of a committee in this parliament and not think that it will have three members vote one way, three members vote the other way, and the chairman vote in terms of the government's vote.

I note many other speeches made in 1995 and 1996 on this subject, including those made by the member for Brisbane Central. At that time, the main opposition to committees was based on the deliberative vote and a casting vote for the chairman. I say to the members opposite to have a look at the 1995 and 1996 *Hansards* and see how vehemently they argued against having three members for each side, with the casting vote for the chairman and a deliberative vote. The members opposite argued all day about it. What do we find in this legislation? Exactly that! The members opposite were presenting that on a four-two. Finally, the opposition convinced the government to have the composition of the committees four-three. However, the government started with having the committees four-two. Even in your greens—

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr LINGARD: The Premier says that that is untrue. I refer the Premier to his own speech to this legislation, in which he states that the member for Toowoomba South was the member who convinced him to have the composition of the committees four-three. He started with four-two. The Premier stated—

I note that the Leader of the Opposition has advised a preference for three non-government members on the parliamentary committees rather than two.

That is why the Premier chose to have three members.

Mr Beattie: That doesn't mean we were going to put up two.

Mr LINGARD: That is what was presented to us in the first place—four-two.

Mr Beattie: Get out!

Mr LINGARD: Why did the Premier say that? If the Premier read the *Hansard* he would see that he did not read it that way; he read it a different way.

A government member interjected.

Mr LINGARD: I read the Premier's speech. I cannot do any more than that. The Premier stated—

I note that the Leader of the Opposition has advised a preference for three non-government members on parliamentary committees rather than two.

The funding program for this committee system is based on six members. Of course, when we said that we wanted the composition of the committees to be four-three, the government forgot to change all the figures; it just went through the legislation quickly and put in threes instead of twos. The government forgot to change its funding figures. The legislation refers to funding for six members of committees, but now it has seven members of committees.

There has been no attempt to correct the anomalies of the committee system. Regardless of how we argue in this House, we would all have to sit down and say that there is no way in the wide world that a committee comprising four government members and three opposition members is going to effectively monitor the government. There is no way that an Auditor-General who looks at invoices and statements is going to give a performance-based assessment of this government.

Mr Beattie interjected.

Mr LINGARD: I agree, and I agree in terms of this whole system. As the Premier knows, I am criticising the decisions of previous members. I am also saying that the Premier should not refer to the recommendations of EARC, because we have changed those EARC recommendations many times. The Premier should not refer to the Fitzgerald recommendations, because we have changed those Fitzgerald recommendations many times. We said that the Fitzgerald recommendations would not work, and they did not work. I see the member for Ashgrove smiling. He knows that some of those recommendations did not work. He and Terry Mackenroth helped me get rid of the Parliamentary Service Commission. No-one wanted it. That was the worst thing that had ever happened to this parliament. In 1995 we said, 'The Speaker will run this parliament.'

This is simply lazy legislation that has reinforced the problems of the previous parliaments. Hopefully, future parliaments will have enough commitment to ensure real and meaningful change.
